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Referring now to FIG. 6 of the drawings, the lifting arm 16' is telescopically extendible and retractable, rather than having two parts pivotable relative to one another, so that the distance between the masts 10', 12' can be varied. A linear actuator could be provided to extend and retract the lifting arm 16'.

The embodiments described above are given by way of example only and various modifications will be apparent to persons skilled in the art without departing from the scope of the invention. For example the masts need not be extendible and retractable. Each mast could be a single part mast with a carriage movable up and down the mast.

What is claimed is:

1. An invalid lifting device comprising a first mast upstanding from a first elongate chassis member, a second mast upstanding from a second elongate chassis member which is parallel or substantially parallel to the first chassis member, a lifting arm supported by and extending between the first and second masts, the lifting arm comprising two parts pivotable relative to one another so that the distance between the masts can be varied, one part being supported by the first mast and the other part being supported by the second mast, and power operated means for moving the two chassis members towards and away from one another, wherein each part of the lifting arm comprises a parallelogram linkage to maintain the chassis members in parallel or substantially parallel relationship as the two chassis members are moved towards and away from one another.
2. An invalid lifting device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the power operated means is provided on or in the lifting arm for pivoting the two parts of the lifting arm relative to one another.
3. An invalid lifting device as claimed in claim 1, wherein each mast is telescopically extendible/retractable.
4. An invalid lifting device as claimed in claim 3, wherein the lifting arm is raised and lowered solely by extending and retracting the first and second masts.
5. An invalid lifting device as claimed in claim 3, wherein the lifting arm can be raised or lowered relative to the first and second masts in addition to being raised or lowered by relative movement of the two mast parts.
6. An invalid lifting device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the lifting arm is the sole means connecting the first mast and chassis member to the second mast and chassis member.
7. An invalid lifting device comprising a first telescopically extendible/retractable mast upstanding from a first elongate chassis member, a second telescopically extendible/retractable mast upstanding from a second elongate chassis member, each mast having an upper part and a lower part, a lifting arm supported by and extending between the first and second masts, wherein the lifting arm is the sole means connecting the first mast and chassis member to the second mast and chassis member.
8. An invalid lifting device as claimed in claim 7, wherein the lifting arm maintains the two chassis members in parallel or substantially parallel relationship.

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9. An invalid lifting device as claimed in claim 7, wherein the lifting arm can be raised or lowered relative to the masts.

10. An invalid lifting device as claimed in claim 7, wherein the lifting arm comprises two parts pivotable relative to one another about a vertical or substantially vertical axis, one part being supported by the first mast and the other part being supported by the second mast.

11. An invalid lifting device as claimed in claim 10, wherein each part of the lifting arm comprises a parallelogram linkage to maintain the chassis members in parallel spaced relationship as the two parts of the arm pivot relative to one another.

12. An invalid lifting device as claimed in claim 10, wherein a motor is provided on or in the lifting arm for pivoting the two parts of the lifting arm relative to one another.

13. An invalid lifting device as claimed in claim 7, wherein the lifting arm is telescopically extendible and retractable so that the distance between the chassis members can be varied.

14. An invalid lifting device as claimed in claim 13, wherein a linear actuator is provided to extend and retract the lifting arm to thereby draw the masts towards one another or move them further apart.

15. An invalid lifting device comprising a first telescopically extendible/retractable mast upstanding from a first elongate chassis member, a second telescopically extendible/retractable mast upstanding from a second elongate chassis member, each mast having an upper part and a lower part, a lifting arm supported by and extending between the first and second masts, wherein the lifting arm comprises two parts pivotable relative to one another about a vertical or substantially vertical axis, one part being supported by the first mast and the other part being supported by the second mast.

16. The invalid lifting device of claim 15, wherein each part of the lifting arm comprises a parallelogram linkage to maintain the chassis members in parallel spaced relationship as the two parts of the arm pivot relative to one another.

17. The invalid lifting device of claim 15, wherein a motor is provided on or in the lifting arm for pivoting the two parts of the lifting arm relative to one another.

18. An invalid lifting device comprising a first telescopically extendible/retractable mast upstanding from a first elongate chassis member, a second telescopically extendible/retractable mast upstanding from a second elongate chassis member, each mast having an upper part and a lower part, a lifting arm supported by and extending between the first and second masts, wherein the lifting arm is telescopically extendible and retractable so that the distance between the chassis members can be varied.

19. The invalid lifting device of claim 18, wherein a linear actuator is provided to extend and retract the lifting arm to thereby draw the masts toward one another or move them further apart.

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